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Dramatics In The Classroom: Activating and Enhancing  
The Elementary Intermediate Level Reading Curriculum

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### Abstract

Elementary classroom teachers have been using drama to teach a variety of subjects since the 1960s. There are a myriad of books on the subject to which educators can turn for ideas to use in their classrooms. Theorists and practitioners have recognized that it is not enough for teachers to simply read about and practice drama in their classrooms; they should be trained in using drama effectively. In the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District teachers are well-equipped and exposed to visual arts lessons. Nearly every school has a music program, but there remains limited training or resources teachers might use to incorporate drama into their curriculum. This project would begin to fill that gap. In this report, I outline the research that justifies the use of drama as a tool to support the reading curriculum in intermediate elementary classrooms. My final project is a set of nine lessons that can be used by any teacher to support reading comprehension skills in intermediate elementary classrooms.

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The Elementary Intermediate Level Reading Curriculum

What is the benefit of using drama to teach reading in an intermediate elementary classroom? Can drama activities improve reading skills in fourth through sixth grade students? What do teachers need to know in order to effectively use drama to teach reading? In this project, I investigated the potential benefits of using drama to teach reading in an intermediate elementary classroom. After establishing a strong research basis for this practice, I created a tool so teachers can effectively use drama to teach reading. This tool, in the form of a concise, bound book, provides a variety of activities that teachers can use to enhance their current reading program through active student engagement. In the past two years, most of the United States adopted The Common Core, a collection of Language Arts and Math standards for all students in grades K-12. Alaska adopted it's own Alaska Standards which are almost identical to the Common Core standards. Though not all standards in reading will be best taught using drama, eight out of the nine standards for reading literature and nine out of the ten standards for reading informational texts can be introduced or reinforced with drama activities. The one standard that would be impossible to teach through drama is the tenth standard, which calls for students to read increasingly complex text. Though drama activities may improve student attitudes about reading and inadvertently lead a student towards this skill, I believe this standard can only be truly taught through the act of reading.

For this project, I sifted through the drama resources I have been collecting in recent years and found the activities that might reinforce understanding of 17 standards in reading per grade level. Because the skills are the same for reading literature as they are for reading informational text, many of the activities were able to be adapted for one or the other, depending on the classroom focus. Similarly, as the standards progress through grade levels, they increase in rigor, but maintain the same learning goal at their root. Thus, each activity meets the goals of multiple grade-level reading standards. I wrote nine lesson plans, including one physical and mental warm-up activity that serves to prepare students for the drama activities. Each activity includes the necessary information

for a teacher to easily execute the lesson in his or her classroom, and indicates the Common Core or Alaska Standard that is the learning focus for the activity. These lessons were shared with educators in Fairbanks through two professional development trainings where teachers received their own hands-on experience with them before using them in a classroom.

### **The Need for Drama Integration**

This section details the personal and educational significance of my project. I will first discuss a brief history of the personal experiences that led to my decision to pursue this project and the reasons I want to use this project in my own classroom. Then, I will describe the educational significance of this project as it relates to other intermediate elementary teachers in Fairbanks, Alaska.

#### **Personal Significance**

My decision to pursue this project grew from my desire to have a user-friendly set of drama activities to use in my own classroom. As a theater artist and drama educator, I became familiar with a variety of creative drama activities that could get a group of students to work together, solve problems, tell stories, and actively learn about subjects. I used these activities with small groups of students (generally six to twelve) and in a drama class environment, with no desks or school supplies to get in the way. Because of my background in theater, I always thought that I would enjoy incorporating drama activities in my own classroom. I found through my first three years of classroom experience, that the daily schedule of a classroom allows just enough time to teach the basic subjects, and any additional activities simply would not fit into the schedule. During my internship year, I took a class that exposed me to the idea that drama could be used to teach other subjects. This idea of integrating drama with other subjects became my tool for getting to use my expertise and skills as a drama educator. Additionally, when I tried using drama to teach reading and social studies, I found that my students became energized and excited about learning. My entire classroom transformed into a buzz of activity and energy that had previously been missing. These experiences led me to create a simple, user-friendly document that is specifically aligned with the Alaska



English/Language Arts Content standards. This document, paired with training on how to implement it in a classroom setting, could allow any teacher to incorporate drama activities into his or her reading curriculum.

### **Educational Significance**

Beyond my personal experiences and biases about the use of drama in a classroom, I have found a strong basis of evidence for this project in a broader educational context. In this section I will argue four points that validate my project: (a) teacher standards mandate that teachers create an actively engaging classroom for students with a variety of learning styles, and drama can be both active and engaging for all learners; (b) the reading goals of students in grades four through six can be achieved through drama activities; (c) research studies have shown that the integration of drama in a language arts curriculum positively impacted reading achievement for students; and (d) drama integration training for teachers in Fairbanks is limited, there is a clear need for more opportunities for teachers to learn how to incorporate drama into their curricula.

**Using drama can help a teacher meet teacher standards.** In 1994, in an effort to improve the academic achievement of Alaskan children by ensuring the quality of Alaska's teaching professionals, Alaska's State Board of Education and Early Development, whose mission is to ensure a quality standards-based education for all students, adopted teacher standards (Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, 2006). These standards have since been amended, but they continue to define the skills and abilities that Alaska's teachers and administrators must possess in order to "effectively prepare today's students for successful lives and productive careers" (Alaska Department of Education & Early Development [AK DEED], 2003). The board adopted eight different standards, encompassing a wide range of skills and abilities they believe teachers need in order to effectively prepare all K-12 students. While all standards are important for teachers to follow, two of them are of particular relevance to this proposal and will be discussed in detail: standard two and standard six.

***Drama accommodates multiple learning styles.*** The second Alaska Teacher Standard relates to a teacher's understanding of the learning styles of his or her students.

It states:

A teacher understands how students learn and develop, and applies that knowledge in the teacher's practice. Performances that reflect attainment of this standard include: accurately identifying and teaching to the developmental abilities of students; and applying learning theory in practice to accommodate differences in how students learn, including accommodating differences in student intelligence, perception, and cognitive style. (AK DEED, 2003)

This means that teachers must not only be aware of the learning styles of each of their students, but must also accommodate those differences. Drama can help teachers meet this standard because it meets a variety of learning styles. For example, as Grainger (1998) pointed out, students can see a story more clearly played out when their classmates create a physical representation of a moment in a story. This visual stimulus serves to engage all students, but especially those who prefer visual learning. Macy (2004) describes how students' senses are engaged through an exercise called "soundscape" in which students work together to make the sounds of a story come to life by using their bodies and other every-day classroom materials. Through this experience audio learners can hear characters and setting come to life through the voices of their classmates. Kinesthetic learners probably benefit most from drama activities because drama often involves movement and kinesthetic learners can physically experience a moment in a story by acting it out. DuPont (1992) studied how drama instruction affected reading comprehension scores in fifth-grade students. DuPont rooted her research in the theory that active, hands-on, or experiential learning is a more effective way to teach students than discussions, lectures, or other forms of passive learning. She drew on research from the 1970s and 1980s that highlights the fact that, through drama, students can "*experience* reading as something lively, enjoyable, and meaningful" (p. 42). Thus, visual learners, audio learners, and kinesthetic learners can deepen their understandings of the text they have read through drama activities. This suggests that teachers can use drama to meet the needs of a variety of learners.

***Drama is active and engaging.*** Not only do teachers need to meet the needs of

many different learners, but according to the sixth teacher standard, they also need to create an active learning environment. The sixth standard states:

A teacher creates and maintains a learning environment in which all students are actively engaged and contributing members. Performances that reflect attainment of this standard include creating and maintaining a stimulating, inclusive, and safe learning community in which students take intellectual risks and work independently and collaboratively. (AK DEED, 2003)

This means that Alaskan teachers are mandated to provide a stimulating learning environment in which all students are actively engaged. In my literature review, I found a variety of sources that highlighted the active and engaging nature of drama in the classroom. As mentioned before, DuPont (1998) strongly advocated for the use of drama in the classroom because of its tendency to be active and experiential. In addition, Smith (1982) discussed the engaging nature of drama by arguing, “If a child is interested, he will learn. If a child is involved, he is interested. Drama encourages involvement, by direct participation (improvisation, role playing, pantomime, characterization) and by indirect participation (emphatic responses to dramatic presentations)” (p.4). Jensen (2001) would agree. As one of the kinesthetic arts described in his book, he stated, “the value of movement and theater cannot be overestimated” (p.77). He cited research studies linking dramatic play to the maturation of the brain’s cortical systems:

Reading, counting, speaking, and problem-solving are all maturation correlated. And it’s play that speeds the process. It does it faster and more efficiently than other means because play usually has the recipe for brain growth built in: challenge, novelty, feedback, coherence, and time. Students often do theater and play games precisely because they are *just challenging enough*, with a novel twist here and lots of feedback. (Jensen, 2001, p. 76)

By using a variety of activities and skills spontaneously, there is no doubt that drama is engaging. If teachers want to meet standard six of the Alaska teacher standards, integrating drama into their curricula would do it.

**Drama can help achieve reading goals.** In addition to the fact that drama can be used as an engaging and inclusive teaching technique, drama has also been documented as a useful tool for teaching the reading goals specific to the intermediate grades. According to O'Donnell & Wood (2004), readers in grade levels 4-6 are in the basic literacy stage of their literacy development. During this stage, students have mastered the ability to read thousands of words instantly and independently. They are now able to read a wide variety of materials. The major goals during this stage are to “expand breadth of experience in reading, comprehend increasingly complex reading material, extend meaning vocabulary, and develop awareness and use of study strategies” (p. 8). Students in grades fourth through sixth are typically age 9 through 12. According to Wood (2007), students at these ages are increasingly able to work independently and study text more in depth and for practical purposes (pp. 107-147). He would agree with the reading goals outlined by O'Donnell and Wood, in that students at this age should be using books in a real-world context.

The above developmental abilities and reading goals align with the Common Core and Alaska Standards in reading. Forty-five states have adopted the Common Core State Standards. In June 2012, Alaska adopted the Alaska English/Language Arts and Mathematics Content Standards, which use virtually the same language as the Common Core, and focus on the same learning objectives. There are standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language, and Math, along with standards for literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. I will only address the standards in reading for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students because they are most relevant to my project. There are currently 9 standards for reading literature and 10 standards for reading informational texts for each grade level. While each grade level has specified learning goals within these standards, they are all summarized by the same main goals. These main goals are introduced in the Introduction to Reading/Language Arts standards with the following statement:

Whatever they are reading, students must also show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of the text, including making an increased

number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts. (AK DEED A, 2012a, p.2)

As is evident from the above statement, the majority of these reading standards are based in the activities involved with reading comprehension. This aligns with O'Donnell & Wood's (2004) goals as well as Wood (2007). Based on the above information, students in grades four through six should be working on two key goals in regards to reading: deepening comprehension of text, and building meaning vocabulary.

Literature shows that drama is an effective way for students to deepen both their understanding of texts and their understanding of new vocabulary. Macy (2004) documented how one fourth-grade teacher used drama to deepen her students understanding of the book, *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen. Macy described how the teacher used imagery exercises, sound exercise, and point of view exercises to delve into the world of the story, thus deepening students' comprehension of the story. McMaster (1998) pointed out that drama can be used to build vocabulary because "new vocabulary presented in the drama context has the benefit of being acted out, thus providing students with a strong mental image of the word, one that has been experienced visually, aurally, and kinesthetically" (p. 578).

These are just two examples of how drama can be used to meet reading goals for intermediate elementary students. I will further explore why drama activities can enhance reading skills in section 3.3 of my literature review. The next section will detail three studies that have shown a quantitative connection between drama integration and reading improvement in students.

**Studies have shown that incorporating drama into a language arts program improves reading achievement in students.** Up to this point in my rationale, I have shown how drama integration can support a teacher in meeting two of the Alaska Teacher Standards as defined by the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development. I have also demonstrated the usefulness of drama activities in supporting the reading goals of students in the intermediate elementary grades. Next, I will describe research that has

linked the use of drama in a language arts curriculum for improving reading skills in students, as shown on standardized tests. In my quest for literature relevant to my project, I found three such studies. The first was conducted in 1992 in south central Pennsylvania. The second study was conducted in 2000 in Chicago. The third study was conducted in 2010 in New Jersey. I will describe the methods and outcomes for each of these studies in order to demonstrate the quantitative research basis for my project.

DuPont (1992) published a report of her findings after conducting a study of fifth graders in which she tracked their reading comprehension scores on the Metropolitan Reading Comprehension Test. DuPont rooted her research in the theory that active, hands-on, or experiential learning is a more effective way to teach students than discussions, lectures, or other forms of passive learning. DuPont further connected drama to reading when she pointed out that reading and drama require similar skills: comprehending plot, characters, vocabulary, story sequence, and cause and effect relationships. She wanted to know if fifth-graders who had been identified as remedial readers could improve standardized test scores after participating in a six-week drama-based reading class.

DuPont studied three groups of 17 fifth-grade students. Group 1 participated in creative drama activities, Group 2 read the same stories as Group 1, but did not participate in the creative drama activities and instead used discussion methods. Group 3 continued with the regular reading program in which all of these students would have participated due to their low reading comprehension scores as fourth graders. All students took a reading comprehension test before the six-week intervention and after the intervention. At the beginning of the study, all students, in all three groups tested equivalent to each other.

During the six-week intervention period, the students in Group 1 (the intervention group) read a story both silently and orally. Then, they dramatized the story in its entirety. These students also participated in verbal extensions of the story in which they would be directed to act as a character or object in the story and then describe the events from that character's perspective. They also participated in pantomime, during which

they might pantomime the actions of a character in the story that were not actually described in the story.

The students in Groups 2 and 3 did not participate in any drama activities, but instead learned through discussion or other traditional teaching methods. Not only did DuPont find a significant increase in the comprehension scores of those students who had participated in the drama activities, but also pointed out that the content covered by the classes was not repeated on the standardized tests. This implies that students were able to transfer their skills acquired during the treatment period to new, unrelated material found on the test. DuPont drew the following conclusions based on these findings:

When children have been involved in the process of integrating creative drama with reading they are not only able to better comprehend what they've read and acted out, but they are also better able to comprehend what they read, but do not act out, such as the written scenarios they encounter on a standardized test.

(DuPont, 1992, p. 50)

Rose, Parks, Androes and McMahon (2000) conducted a similar study in which they sought to explore "the causal relationship between drama-based reading instruction and reading comprehension among fourth-grade students" (p. 25). They worked with a nonprofit arts education organization called Whirlwind, who designed a reading program called Reading Comprehension through Drama (RCD). Four Chicago elementary schools participated in the study. Two classrooms within each school were randomly chosen; one as the experimental group and one as the control group. All students were assessed in reading comprehension using the reading comprehension subtest of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in the spring of third grade, prior to the experiment. Students were tested again, in the spring of fourth grade, after the experiment. A total of 94 students participated in the RCD and 85 students were in the control group that did not participate in the drama program. Those in the experimental group participated in a 10-week program in which drama artists spent one hour, twice a week, for a total of 20 hours teaching the reading curriculum using drama activities. The drama program included four stages that explored story, sequence, perception, and evaluation. After the 10-week

program, the students who participated in the program improved their reading scores more than those who did not participate. In fact, those who participated in the program showed an average improvement of three months more than those in the control group (Rose, et. al, 2000).

Walker, Tabone and Weltsek (2010) conducted a similar quantitative study to measure the effects of using theater strategies to teach language arts in sixth and seventh grade classrooms. The authors asked to what extent this integration would positively impact students' language arts and mathematics performance on standardized test, as well as how the integration would positively affect students' engagement in school. They also were interested in the extent to which students would sustain their learning gains after returning to traditional instruction. The project focused on showing students and teachers how to use voice, body, and visual representations to interpret stories. The curriculum was created to align with state standards for reading, get students to delve deeper into the literature they studied through group interactions, and increase student confidence in writing.

The researchers randomly selected four schools at which they would implement the integration program. They also randomly selected four other schools that would serve as control groups. At all of the schools, teachers were then randomly selected to be either a control or integration classroom. Twenty-eight teachers were involved, fourteen of which participated as integration classrooms. All of the classrooms studied the exact same books (in compliance with the school district curriculum and state standards). They also served comparable student populations in terms of race as well as test scores. The integration lasted over an entire year and teachers collaborated with teaching artists in their classrooms to provide instruction.

The results of this project showed not only that students in a theater arts-integrated classroom were more likely to pass the state assessment, but that "being in an arts-integrated classroom increased the odds of students passing the state assessment by 77 percent" (Walker et al., 2010, p. 370). Furthermore, a student's odds of passing the state assessment in mathematics increased by 42% if a student were in the drama-



integrated language arts classroom. The researchers also found that students in the drama-integrated classroom were less likely to be absent from school than their non-integrated counterparts. When the researchers looked at whether or not these improvements were sustained after students returned to a traditional language arts classroom, they found that students who had been in the drama-integrated language arts program as seventh graders were more likely to test as proficient in language arts on their eighth-grade assessment than those students who were in a traditional language arts classroom.

The previous three studies illustrate that drama can be used as an effective teaching tool for reading comprehension. In all studies, students improved their reading comprehension scores on standardized tests more than their counterparts, or showed a greater increase in their reading comprehension abilities due to drama integration. This evidence supports the use of drama as an effective teaching tool in reading curricula.

**Limited training opportunities for teachers in Fairbanks.** While drama integration programs have been used in other communities to successfully improve reading, there are currently few opportunities for drama integration training for teachers in Fairbanks, Alaska. Additionally, there is no tool that specifically links drama activities with state standards. In the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District there are three known opportunities for exposure of drama skills to elementary teachers. First, teachers who are trained through the UAF School of Education take a semester-long class encompassing integration of visual arts, music and drama. This is not available to all Fairbanks teachers, however, and there is a limited amount of time devoted to drama integration. Another opportunity in Fairbanks is a 10-day summer arts integration training through the Alaska Arts Education Consortium (2011). These trainings are only available once during the summer and for a limited number of teachers. They were not available locally to Fairbanks teachers in the summer of 2012 and future trainings are not planned. Last, it is possible for teachers to gain exposure to drama training through the school district's professional development trainings in the Fall and Spring of each year, only if those trainings are offered. No such trainings have been offered in the past four years of school district trainings I have attended.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

In the previous pages, I have outlined the justification for a drama integration training in Fairbanks. Drama can help a teacher meet the needs of his or her students by providing teaching tools that engage students aurally, visually, and kinesthetically. The reading goals for intermediate students, specifically related to comprehension and vocabulary expansion, can be achieved through drama activities. Authors have documented the successful use of drama in other communities, yet teachers' options for drama integration training in Fairbanks are limited.

In this section I will establish a strong theoretical basis for my project by exploring the literature that supports arts integration in public schools, explaining how drama can address the needs of a culturally and intellectually diverse classroom. I will then explore the theories authors have described to explain the successful connection between drama and reading.

### **A Case for Arts Integration**

Before I can make a case for drama integration, it is important to address the research done on arts integration, in general. Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, and McLaughlin (2007) define arts integration as “teaching ‘through’ and ‘with’ the arts,” by connecting artistic subjects with other standard classroom subjects (p.12). Booth and Masayuki (2004) argue the engaging nature of arts when they state, “to watch a child completely engaged in an arts experience is to recognize that the brain is on, driven by the aesthetic and emotional imperative to make meaning, to say something, to represent what matters” (p. 15). They are not alone in observing this. In fact, so many people have come to see the value of arts that it has led to major publications and inquiries by the White House into the state of affairs of arts education.

The President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH, 2011), whose purpose is to advise the President of the United States on cultural issues, published a report titled *Reinvesting in arts education: Winning America’s future through creative schools*. This comprehensive report sought to review the current state of arts education, explore research detailing its benefits, and identify areas of improvement. The report put

forth a strong case for the benefits of arts education and specifically, arts integration. It cited studies documenting “significant links between arts integration models and academic and social outcomes for students, efficacy for teachers, and school-wide improvements in culture and climate,” ultimately arguing that arts integration is “efficient, addressing a number of outcomes at the same time” (p. 19). The report detailed research regarding the benefits of arts integration as seen through many research projects across the country and over a long period of time. It highlighted brain research that supported the use of arts integration, pointing to the ability of arts to support other skills. For example, the report cited reading research that emphasizes visualization (creating mental images while reading) as a strong method for reading comprehension. The report stated that this reading comprehension skill “could be supported by helping students draw or paint pictures or demonstrate with movement or acting what they imagine from a story” (p. 23). Additionally, the report detailed the need for improved arts programs in schools, referencing high dropout rates, a decline in arts programs, and inequities in arts opportunities for students. Ultimately, this report made a compelling case for integrating arts into the public school curriculum. It asserted two key points: first, that all students deserve access to arts in school because arts are part of the culture and life of our country; and second, that decades of research supports the use of arts in meeting a wide range of educational objectives. Ultimately, this document recommends the use of arts integration as an effective means to teach necessary subjects to elementary students.

Jack Petrash (2002) argued that infusing education with the arts would not only enliven students, but also teachers. He wrote about teachers involved in a six-week professional development course to enliven their social studies teaching using art. Petrash drew upon a variety of authors and researchers who have supported the use of arts in the classroom. He noted that arts integration “supports cognitive growth, heightens observation, furthers development of higher order thinking by fostering a wide range of brain activity” (p. 16). Ultimately, he maintained that “children need to be engaged actively, emotionally, and thoughtfully in school...the same principle holds true for teachers” (p. 19).

Clearly, there is a strong case for integrating arts into classroom teaching. Not only does it support other skills, activate students' brains in a variety of ways, but it can also support and enliven teachers in their work.

### **Drama Integration With Multi-Cultural Students and Students With Identified Learning Disabilities (LD)**

Teachers are charged with the responsibility of maintaining a learning environment for a diverse group of students. Students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District come from a wide range of cultures. The 2012 Enrollment and Ethnicity Report found on the school district's website shows the demographics for students in all elementary schools in the district. They are as follows: 61% White; 5.8% Black; 8% Hispanic; 2.4% Asian; 1.2% American Indian; 10.9% Alaska Native; 9.7% Multi-ethnic; and 1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (FNSBSD, 2012). Not only will a classroom include cultural variations, but students will also encompass a variety of learning abilities. According to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's "State of Alaska Report Card to the Public," 497 fourth, fifth and sixth-grade students with disabilities were tested in Reading on the 2012 Standards Based Assessments in the Fairbanks school district (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development [AK DEED B], 2012b). In my school, 24 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students identified as having disabilities were tested. This begs the question, how will drama work in classrooms with culturally and intellectually diverse students? Some authors have looked into the use of drama in these kinds of classrooms. The following pages summarize the findings of these authors.

Medina (2004) studied the use of drama in a fifth grade classroom in a Midwest Urban Academy and Professional Development elementary school. Medina, an after-school literacy coach, created and implemented the curriculum in the classroom. Her goal was to investigate the complex issues explored in Latino/a literature. In order to achieve this goal, she led students through a series of activities in which they explored the idea of culture, and then expanded this understanding by using a story about a boy who crosses the US border illegally with his mother and then is bullied by other children. Medina's

students explored the story from a variety of characters' perspectives. The activities she used included writing in role, hot-seating, tableaux creations, and discussion. She asserted that drama can be an effective method for exploring diversity issues because "moving beyond passive dialogues, participants actively create and perform images and discourses that, if carefully examined, allow understanding of the complex ways we live in a diverse society" (p. 273). Medina concluded that, through these activities, the students were able to engage in meaningful dialogue on a complex and relevant topic.

Jackson and Bynum (1997) were interested in how drama can help students who are both culturally diverse and diagnosed with a behavioral disorder. They intended to give teachers of this population some suggestions on how to use the drama process in classrooms. The authors explored the literature that supports the use of drama and asserted, "through the medium of drama, children are afforded a multisensory approach to the concept of learning" (para. 5). The authors also pointed out how using drama might help teachers better meet the needs of students at a variety of learning levels. They stated an example in which a child who uses a different speaking dialect or language pattern can be encouraged to learn standard English by working on writing a play in which the teacher can approach that students' language indirectly. They state that this could facilitate a situation in which "the teacher has met the child where h/she is and carries the child where he/she needs to go without making the child feel ashamed [sic] or embarrassed [sic]" (para. 19). Beyond simply arguing for the benefits and uses of drama in a culturally diverse classroom, Jackson and Bynum offer seven different movement activities that can be used by teachers to encourage physical control and creative expression simultaneously. The activities are divided into two categories that would be useful in a classroom with students experience behavioral disorders. One category is focused on tension reduction and trust-building. The other set of activities are focused on quieting and relaxation techniques.

Edmiston (2007) wrote about the usefulness of drama as a way to make classrooms more inclusive. In his article he described a visit to a self-contained second grade class for visually impaired or blind students. He discussed the difficulties with the

language and culture surrounding children with disabilities as well as the benefits of drama to counteract those negative experiences. Edmiston pointed out early in the article that his ideas are appropriate for all teachers, not just those working with students with disabilities. He pointed out the benefits of drama in its emphasis on students and teachers working alongside one another, in imaginary situations in which they are free of the constraints of real life. Edmiston referred to Vygotsky's work surrounding child development, specifically related to students with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of finding multi-modal approaches to teaching students with impairments rather than focusing on those impairments as barriers to education. Edmiston further argued that language and literacy is learned through social interactions, which makes drama an ideal way to improve those skills because it is rooted in social interactions. He used the example of the students, in pretending to be astronauts on Mars, talking, reading, writing, and executing their mission successfully. This social participation and experience, he argued, helped to develop children's sense of competence, which is a benefit to all students, but especially those with impairments. He commented that in drama, these students "...were doing what anyone does who reads fiction or watches a movie—they pretended to be people that they could never actually be. Yet at the same time, they identified with the interests, hopes, and goals of those people" (p. 343). He drew on a variety of sources that emphasized the importance of children as seeing themselves as competent in order that they might develop a strong sense of identity, and thus become competent.

Similarly, Garret & O'Connor (2010) argued that readers' theater could be very effective in supporting students with identified learning disabilities in not only meeting social needs, but also helping to develop their fluency. They also said that this method could improve student attitudes or beliefs about reading. The authors studied how readers' theater was being implemented in four different special education classrooms serving students from Kindergarten through fifth grade. In each classroom, Readers' Theater was a daily activity and the teachers included all students in the process.

Ultimately, this was a method to engage students in authentic reading activities that improved student fluency.

While working in a classroom, teachers not only need to teach students basic subject materials, but they also need to teach students how to work well in a diverse community. As the above research has shown, drama can be effective in achieving these goals.

### **Theories Explaining Why Drama Enhances a Reading Program**

Clearly, based on the above research and statistics, drama can be an effective tool to teach reading in intermediate elementary classrooms. Authors who have written about this work have described multiple theories explaining why drama works well to teach reading. In this section I will detail four theories authors have posited to explain the connections between reading comprehension and drama: (a) Drama encourages students to view a story from multiple perspectives; (b) drama encourages students to make personal connections with text; (c) drama provides a rich sensory experience for students, engaging them on a physical, visual, and aural level; and (d) participating in drama is enjoyable and improves student attitudes about reading.

Viewing a story from multiple perspectives is important in reading comprehension. As mentioned before, Medina (2004) encouraged students to do this by having students write a journal entry from the perspective of a chosen character. Medina also had students participate in character interviews in which they interviewed each other so as to understand the motives of the characters. Macy (2004) also witnessed a teacher using this method so her students could better understand the book, *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen. In the fourth grade classroom, students participated in an activity called Giving Witness in which they took turns playing the role of the moose while the rest of the class, in the role of Brian, asked questions about a particular event. This, according to Macy, encouraged higher level thinking among all of the students, whether they were asking questions from Brian's perspective, or answering them from the moose's perspective. Kelner & Flynn (2006), point out how character interviews, like the one described above, are used as a theater rehearsal technique when directors want their actors to deepen their

understanding of a character. Character interviews work similarly when getting students to deepen their understanding of a character's perspective in a novel. Kelner & Flynn argue that this activity gives students the opportunity to think deeply about a text by engaging them in the act of questioning. For example, the authors suggest, "students will ask or develop questions that: clarify evidence in the text; probe for deeper meaning; seek to discover new information; promote wondering; speculate on possibilities; search for answers to problems" (p.112). They further suggest that students practice inferring through this activity as they "combine clues found in the text with prior knowledge to make logical guesses" (p.113). Students also practice higher-level thinking when they "take information from what they have read, combine it with prior knowledge, and create something new" (p.113). These are just a few examples of drama activities that can work towards teaching understanding of multiple perspectives in reading.

In addition to understanding multiple perspectives, students need to be able to personally connect to text in order to understand it better. McMaster (1998) demonstrated the importance of students making personal connections with text by expressing their own opinions. For example, she described an activity called "Conscience Alley" in which a teacher stops his read-aloud of a story at a critical turning point. He then asks students to express their opinions about what choice they believe a character should make. The teacher directs students to stand in two lines. The teacher, in role as the main character, then walks through the corridor called "Conscience Alley," as the students, in role as his conscience, tell him what to do. This engages the students in the text personally.

Activating students' senses is another way that drama can improve literacy. Macy (2004) describes one way that teachers can activate students' hearing sense to better understand a story. In an activity called "Soundscape," students create sounds that the main character might be hearing in a particular moment. This serves to make the story come to life, so students can better understand it. DuPont (1992) mentions the tactile sensory experience of drama as beneficial for reading comprehension. Sight is another sense that is often engaged through drama activities. DuPont also describes that students who participate in creative drama create clearer mental images of written material. One



way that teachers can do this is by having students participate in an activity called “Freeze-frame” (Grainger, 1998). In this activity, students work together and use their bodies to create physical images of characters or moments in a story.

Yet another aspect of drama that was often cited by authors is its ability to excite students and improve their attitudes about reading. Bidwell (1992) states, “perhaps the most important reason to use drama, however, is that it is fun. Students enjoy it because of the added variety and excitement” (p. 653).

In the beginning of this paper, I asked whether drama could work to teach reading to intermediate level elementary students. Through the previous pages, I have documented the research and theories justifying the use of drama to teach reading.

### **Statement of Bias**

I approached this project from a theater background, knowing the personal significance drama has made in my own life and having seen some of the positive effects of using drama in an intermediate classroom. I also approach this from an education background. I am a beginning teacher as well as the daughter of two elementary educators. Growing up in the elementary school environment, surrounded by the culture of teachers has deeply influenced my life, my perspective, and my beliefs. I did not know what research existed verifying this practice, however, and approached the research with an open mind about what I might find.

### **Methods**

In this section, I describe the methods I used to implement my project. This includes how I developed a set of lessons and shared them with other educators. I will include what went differently than expected and how my students responded.

### **Project Design & Implementation**

In order to create an effective, relevant, and successful tool for teachers, I first reviewed the volumes of lessons that had already been created by drama and education professionals. Through this process, I found that many of these texts were focused on a wide range of ages, from Kindergarten through adults. They also did not consider the limitations of a regular classroom. Many of the activities did not acknowledge how they

might be integrated with other subjects and instead seemed to stand alone as drama education programs or activities.

My goal was to sift through the literature of drama lessons and identify those activities that I believed could closely align to the Common Core and Alaska Standards in Reading. As I read through the literature, I flagged activities that fit three basic criteria: first, activities needed to be brief and manageable, taking no longer than one or two hours; second, they needed to fit within a typical elementary classroom set-up including desks, chairs, and at least 25 students; third, they could not require much in the way of teacher preparatory time or resources. After sifting through the books and flagging activities that fit the above three requirements, I turned my focus to the Common Core and Alaska Standards in Reading for grades 4-6. Since each standard at each grade level often reflected similar skills to those standards at the next grade level, I started by writing each standard for all three grade levels on a separate sheet of paper. I wrote the Reading in Literature standard in one column and the Reading Informational Text standard in another column. This would allow me to recognize when I found activities that might support learning of the educational goal in only Reading Literature, only Reading Informational Texts, or both.

With my pages devoted to each standard nearby, I re-read the activities I had previously flagged in drama books. While re-reading each activity, I considered which standard it might help teach. If it fit with a particular standard, I wrote the activity name, author, and page number on the sheet under the standard. Sometimes activities met multiple standards and I wrote them on multiple pages. Other times, activities didn't seem to meet any standards. After writing each activity under its corresponding standard, I noticed that some standards did not have any activities written under them. This illuminated the fact that while drama can support the learning of certain reading goals, it does not work for all of them. It is also worth noting that the standards without activities were often fairly cerebral or philosophical in their nature and might be better addressed through discussion and written reflections rather than drama.

After identifying the activities that fit with reading standards, I chose those activities that I thought were most realistic for a classroom, and that I could pilot in my own classroom. I wrote the basic procedures for each activity and then used them in my own classroom with my own 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students. After each activity, I asked my students for feedback about the activity, and recorded their responses. Later, I typed up the full document, including procedures, time needed, pre-activity and post-activity options, as well as notes and variations. Often, I referenced my own classroom experiences to give real-world advice to teachers. I followed this process for about 6 months of the school year.

### **Description of the Final Project**

My final product is a twenty-page manual, “A Collection of Drama Activities to Support Reading” (see Appendix B), that can be used by teachers to access a variety of drama games to enhance, support, or introduce reading concepts. An introduction outlines the goals and uses of the manual. It includes suggestions for classroom management, space considerations, sources, and how standards are referenced. The final product contains nine lesson plans for activities to use in a classroom. It includes warm-up activities to transition into the dramatic exercise and establish an appropriate environment for the dramatic play within the classroom.

The entry for each activity includes: the name of the activity; original source of activity (if any); pre-activity suggestions; post-activity suggestions; related Common Core/Alaska standard in reading; time needed to teach the activity; basic procedures for teaching the activity; variations of the activity; and possible extensions in writing or speaking and listening. Each activity is listed in three indexes according to reading objective, reading standard, and time needed.

The activities are linked to related reading standards that focus on deepening student understanding of text. They include: (a) sensory activities that engage students visually, aurally and kinesthetically; (b) point-of-view exercises in which students consider multiple perspectives in a text; and (c) reflective exercises in which student make personal connections with a text.

All of the activities are focused on bringing texts to life by having students act out moments, embody characters, watch others do so, or express the thoughts and feelings of characters. Each activity requires that students understand a text, and then create something new based on their understanding, be it a physical choice, statement, or thought.

### **Training/Dissemination**

When I originally proposed this project, I planned to offer a training to teachers after school one day. Instead, I found opportunities within already existing classes. In February, I had the opportunity to share my work with University of Alaska School of Education Elementary Interns in Fairbanks. I planned a 90-minute training in which I shared all of the activities I had tried with my students so far. In May, I was invited to speak at a writing class for K-12 teachers in our school district. I took this opportunity to share my lessons. I originally thought I would include a brief multi-media introduction before teaching the activities, but I decided that most participants would benefit more from a hands-on experience. For both trainings I spent about 90 minutes simply demonstrating each activity, with brief discussions to address questions throughout.

I think sharing my product within an already-scheduled for-credit class was the best way to disseminate my product. I did not ask them to take 90 minutes out of their day to participate in a training worth no credit. I believe that if I would have advertised the training as a stand-alone, zero-credit activity, it would not have been as well-attended.

### **Limitations**

I thought that only developing lessons for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers would be a limitation, but it wasn't. In my trainings I acknowledged that my focus was on 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade reading standards, but invited participants to brainstorm how the lessons could be used for other subjects and grade-levels. There was always a wealth of responses. I was also sure to give my lesson plans and resource sheets in the form of Microsoft Word documents so teachers could modify them as needed for their own purposes. I was surprised at how receptive and interested teachers from all levels were to my product. I ended up showing my activities to about twenty-five teachers and twenty-five Student-

Teachers working in classrooms from Kindergarten through high school. They were all very positive and creative about how they could use the lessons.

Another key limitation I identified was that of scope. I thought 90 minutes would not be enough time to teach valuable skills or get teachers to use them. I still see this as a problem, but I am confident that with continued training opportunities for dissemination, teachers will use these lessons. Even after one 90 minute training, I heard back from multiple participants about how much they used the activities I shared. It would still be ideal to provide follow-up trainings where we could discuss classroom experiences and problem-solve for those who encountered difficulties. Classroom visits and coaching would provide even more support and assurance that teachers could use the lessons.

The real limitations of my project were that fewer standards fit with fewer activities. When I went about connecting the two, I found it was harder than I thought it would be to find a lesson for every standard. I ended up finding more than one lesson for the same standards and realized that there are certain standards that lend themselves to drama better than others. For example, Alaska's English/Language Arts standards in reading include anchor standards, which are broad standards that carry through all grade levels. Each grade level then has more specific skills delineated. There are four anchor standards in Reading: Key Ideas and Details; Craft and Structure; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas; and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity. I found that the first anchor standard, Key Ideas and Details, was most easily linked to drama activities. The other three anchor standards (analyze word choices, text structures, and style of text) were difficult to explore using drama activities.

Another limitation was finding the time in my own classroom, and also finding the courage to do something new and different. While I received positive feedback from my students every time, I had to take a leap of faith each time I tried something new. I think this is one of the most difficult things about using drama in the classroom. We, as teachers, need to be willing to trust our students. We also need to be willing to be flexible. Often, the lessons took longer than expected and students didn't want to move on once we began. I also found the importance of asking for feedback from my students

after the activity. When I might have thought that an activity was difficult and my students didn't enjoy it, they would surprise me with their positive feedback. I made a point to connect with students who I thought were having a particularly difficult time with the activity to be sure I wasn't simply asking the enthusiastic students their opinions (which would more likely be positive). If I had more time, I would have tried out more activities. I still intend to try these with my students over future years, adding them to my collection of lesson plans.

### **Outcomes**

#### **Impact on Teaching Practice**

This project had a positive impact on my teaching practices. I enjoyed exploring new activities with my students and hearing their feedback. I found that students were much more receptive to new ideas than I thought they would be. This project taught me to trust my own passion for theater and bring that enthusiasm into my classroom teaching practice. I learned the importance of asking my students for feedback and making changes based on that feedback. Through this project, I learned new effective and exciting tools to use in my classroom. Now that I have tried them, I will be much more likely to use them again.

I believe this project had a positive impact on other teachers as well. Both of my trainings were successful and well received. I demonstrated each lesson plan, teaching it as if I were teaching it to my students. Participants were invited to interrupt often and they asked questions throughout. Overall, they seemed to really enjoy the experience. Just as with my own group of students, these adults went from sitting passively, tired, at the end of a long day of receiving instruction, to loud, energetic laughter and engagement in the activities. While I did not develop an exit-survey for participants, I received informal feedback from participants during and after both trainings. For example, after my training at the Writing Institute in June, nearly all teachers raised their hands when asked if they might use any of the activities in the future. At both trainings, I noticed skeptical facial expressions when I first began. As the training continued, participants relaxed and became more receptive to what I was sharing.

**Impact on Student Learning**

Originally, I thought I would use an assessment form for each activity in order to document this project's impact on students learning. I tried this during my first few activities, but found it to be cumbersome and unnecessary. I realized that the goals of my activities were not necessarily to assess student understanding, but rather to activate students, get them out of their seats, moving and engaged with the world of reading. Instead of complicated assessment tools, I shifted to a simpler system that involved asking students for informal feedback and recording their responses. This allowed both my students and me to reflect on an activity and its' benefits, uses, and problems.

Every time I introduced an activity from my project to my students, they became enthusiastically engaged. After the activity, I asked students for feedback and it was overwhelmingly positive. Often students said that it was "fun" and that "we should do it more often." They would tell me how it made reading much more fun or how they learned better from the activity because they saw things acted out and got to physically engage with each other and with texts. I also received constructive feedback from students when I realized I hadn't planned for enough time, grouped kids in too large of groups, or would try to start an activity one day and finish it the next. Students would tell me why they preferred smaller groups, more time, or to do activities from start to finish in one day. Asking my students for their feedback gave them confidence and communicated to them that I cared about their opinions. I also included their feedback in my lesson plans, which I think will be valuable to other teachers. I could tell that my students benefited from my lessons because of the way they became energetic, excited, and challenged by the work. Learning became enjoyable and the room would fill with laughter and applause. I also was able to see what my students understood or didn't understand when I led them through some activities. For example, the Newscast activity showed me that some of my 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls could not identify the appropriate main idea and supporting details in an article. I was also able to see, very clearly, just how much my students could infer about texts, and how well they were paying attention to my read aloud books.

The positive feedback I have received from my own students, UAF Elementary Education Interns, and other teachers is evidence that this project has already and will continue to positively impact student learning.

**Further Plans for Dissemination**

Through this project, I have received positive feedback and anticipate that I will continue to share this project with educators in the future. After my training with UAF School of Education Elementary Interns, I was approached by multiple participants who wanted to know more about my project. Later in the school year, I heard from many participants that not only had they successfully used an activity with their students, but also how much their students had loved it. At the end of the writing institute training in June, I asked participants to raise a hand if they thought they would use any of my materials in the future and the majority of the class raised their hands. I also heard directly from my Committee Chairperson, Amy Vinlove, that her usually unenthusiastic stepson came home from school bubbling with excitement about an activity I had shared with the intern working in his classroom. He had no idea that she was involved in my project.

I have mentioned this project with other teachers at my school and they are excited to learn more. I have plans to share this work at Professional Learning Community time or during school-wide professional development. I have hopes to continue to work with the School of Education and share my project with the intern groups annually.



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**Training Schedule**

Total time: 90 minutes, 1:00-2:30pm

1:00-1:10 Brief introduction to drama in classroom

- focus on process rather than product
- reading in 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>, but we'll talk about ways to expand or modify for other grades/subjects
- ask questions at any time
- About 9 activities, I tried/tested with my class this year
- I will teach activities as if I were teaching them to my class, narrate my thoughts, and we'll reflect on each one as we go

1:10-1:20 Modify My Action

1:20-1:30 Read Aloud "Arrogant Swans" story as class

1:30-1:40 Who Am I?

1:40-1:55 Tableau Big Moments

1:55-2:00 Talk Show- Whole Group (ask for question suggestions from group)

2:00-2:05 Conscience Alley

2:05-2:20 Newscast with "Time For Kids" issue

2:20-2:30 Talk Show- Small Group (if time allows- or just discuss & hand out planning sheets)

2:30-2:45 Available for questions, feedback, and discussion if interested

# A Collection of Drama Activities to Support Reading

Compiled By Sarah Finnell

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## Introduction

This project grew from my desire to have a simple, classroom-friendly set of drama activities to use with my 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. As a theater artist and drama educator, I had become familiar with a variety of creative drama activities that could get a group of students to work together, solve problems, tell stories, and actively learn about subjects. As a drama teacher I had used these activities with small groups of students in an open room setting (no desks or school supplies). As a classroom teacher, I wanted to incorporate drama into my classroom, but found that time and space were both limiting factors. My hope with this project was to adapt those activities to be used by any classroom teacher in a room filled with students and desks. I chose to focus on Reading because that seemed like the most logical subject that could link with drama. As I began to look into the subject, I found a large body of research supporting the use of drama in classrooms, particularly to deepen reading comprehension. I also acquired a stack of books on the subject. In order to create my resource, I sifted through the books, looked to the Common Core and Alaska Standards in Reading for grades 4-6, and tested out the activities in my own classroom. By the end of the year, I had come up with the activities you will find in this book. I hope they are as useful to you as they have been to my students and me.

While these lessons were written with a specific focus on the Common Core and Alaska Standards in reading, I think you will see how most could be used to support the learning of many other subjects and across a wide variety of grade levels. These activities can be used as one-time stand-alone lessons, or you can look at my suggestions for extending or reflecting on the lesson after it has concluded. Every activity was tested in a multi-age 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and I often include comments made by students or my own reflections and suggestions based on my experiences. They are written to be relatively quick, some 5-15 minutes, others up to 2 hours. They are focused on process rather than product. This is not about spending weeks creating a polished performance piece for parents or other classes (though, you can certainly use some of these activities as jumping-off points for such a performance if you are inspired to do so)! Rather, the focus is on students learning the self-control, reflection, and creative process necessary to participate in these activities. Deepening reading comprehension skills is a main goal for these activities, but an underlying objective is a desire to get kids out of their seats, physically active, and engaging with texts in meaningful, memorable ways.

**Classroom Management:** Drama requires that students be active participants, often moving around and using their voices and/or bodies in unconventional ways. This often brings up management concerns for teachers. You already have systems in place to get student attention if you feel things are getting too loud or out of hand. Whatever your quiet signal, be sure to remind students of your expectations before getting into a drama activity. A helpful tool if you are participating in character is your ability to “zip” in or out of character. For example, if you are in character as a talk show host, you can always zip (using your hands to unzip an imaginary zipper up your body) out of character to remind students that if they are not willing to take the activity seriously they can go back to silent textbook reading and worksheets or

quizzes. Or you might remind them of your expectations for calm and control. After getting their consent to behave appropriately, you can “zip” back into character by zipping your imaginary zipper the opposite direction and resuming your role.

**Space Considerations:** Each of these activities was designed and used in a typical classroom with students sitting at tables rather than desks. Often, students move around the room, in between tables during movement activities. The front of the classroom (where I typically lecture) is where students might stand for an individual performance. When we need a “performance space,” as in the Newscast or Small Group Talk Show activities, we push a few tables back and use a corner of the room. If you don’t have a space where you commonly gather all of your students, you may want to spend a bit of time planning where this space may be and having your students practice creating this space as quickly as possible. You can time them, then challenge them to beat their time or see if they can do it in under 3 minutes. If it takes longer than 3-5 minutes to get into “performance mode,” you might want to re-think your plan, or make do with smaller space so the transition does not become a time-waster for your class. It might be just as easy to have students stay in their seats and establish the front of the classroom as the performance space, without any need for room re-arranging.

**Sources:** If I found an activity in a specific book and haven’t seen it elsewhere, I referenced the direct source. If I learned the activity through previous trainings, or know that it has been used by a wide variety of teachers, I did not include a source. You can likely search for it on the internet for more information, other variations, or ideas on how to lead it. See page 20 of this book for a list of the most helpful resources I found while creating this project.

**How standards are referenced:** “RL” refers to Reading Literature and “RI” refers to Reading Informational text. The first number after the letter code refers to grade level, and the second number refers to the individual standard. For example, RL 4.1 refers to the first standard in Reading Literature for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. I often paraphrase a specific part of the standard that I believe is supported by the activity. Some standards are multi-faceted, so often an activity will only really support one part of one standard. Often, I cite multiple grade levels, but the same standard. This is because the first standard in Reading Literature includes similar elements across 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, though they increase in complexity. Some lessons reference multiple standards. This is because I found that any of those standards could be taught using the lesson (though I certainly would not teach all standards at once). It really depends on your understanding goals. Your assessment of those goals will most likely come with a follow-up writing or speaking activity rather than the drama lesson alone. I encourage you to find other connections for these activities. The activity might not teach understanding of a standard directly, but will hopefully help engage your students in thinking about text and interacting with it in an active way.



**In general:** Use what you like, throw out what you don't, and adapt or modify anything to meet your students' needs!

Feedback/questions: I am still learning and would appreciate any feedback you'd like to send about these lessons. I am also happy to respond to any questions you have. My email is [sarah.finnell@k12northstar.org](mailto:sarah.finnell@k12northstar.org) (as of July 2014). You can contact Pearl Creek Elementary School in Fairbanks, AK if you find that this email address is no longer current and I should be available, or they might give you my forwarding information in case I have moved.

## Warm-up: Go/Stop/Melt

Students practice moving around the classroom with control, following verbal instructions.

<p><b>Time:</b> 5-20 minutes. This can be a quick, fun activity if students are already familiar with the process. You can stretch it out to take longer as well.</p>	
<p><b>Standard(s)/Purpose:</b> This warm-up activity will help loosen students up, get them to practice moving around with control and exploring movement with their bodies. This activity could meet a wide variety of standards depending on your focus: character, setting, motivations, emotion, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Before the activity:</b> Students need to understand that the expectations of this activity involve moving around the classroom without interacting with others. This can be difficult at first, so it is helpful to simply practice walking, stopping, and melting until all students can successfully move around without talking or interacting.</p>	<p><b>Options for after the activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This would be a great warm-up for “Tableau: Main Events,” “Who Am I?” “Modify My Action,” “Talk Show,” or “Machine”—any activity that involves students embodying characters physically.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procedures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask students to silently stand up and find “their own space” in the room- approximately arms length from any other person.</li> <li>○ Say, “When I say ‘Go’ I want you to walk around the room silently, without talking, touching, or even making eye contact with anyone else.” – students practice this.</li> <li>○ Say, “Stop.” and wait until all students have frozen in place. Spotlight students who are particularly focused or controlled by saying “Spotlight on _____,” while using your arms to point out one student, “Notice how s/he froze her/his entire body from head to tow, even his/her eyes are focused on one location.”</li> <li>○ Say, “Go,” again and have students practice walk around again, commenting on how they should be walking around silently, not touching, talking, or looking at anyone else.</li> <li>○ Say, “Stop,” again and this time, coach students to “melt down into the ground as if you were a candle of wax, melting all the way down, careful not to touch or talk to anyone else, until you’ve melted all the way into the floor and every part of you is melted down to the floor”</li> <li>○ You might practice this process of students going, stopping, and melting until they can do it with calm, control, and focus.</li> <li>○ When they are ready, move on to the next part of the activity in which they move around while portraying different characters, emotions, or settings: Say something like, “When I say ‘Go’ this time, I want you to begin moving around the room as _____.” Here is where you can introduce content area. A good start is to practice with things like, “an animal whose name begins with the letter ____.” When you have students stop or freeze, you can spotlight on one student, ask them to put their animal into motion and ask the other kids to guess who they are. Point out how that person is moving their body to portray a particular animal. Notice how they use different levels, speeds, and movements in a specific way to portray a creature. You can also use emotions/moods, different possible settings/temperatures/ages.</li> <li>○ After practicing with general concepts, have students demonstrate understanding of a shared text or context by having them move as different characters from books, or move through different settings.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Notes/Variations:</b> This activity can relate to many fiction and non-fiction topics that you’ve read about or are reading about. It can be a fun, quick way to reinforce a new concept in the middle of whole-class textbook reading and get the kids up and moving. It is a nice introduction to the idea of moving around the room in a controlled way and following directions. Allowing kids time to melt into the floor and relax can be helpful in creating a calm environment and enjoyable movement break.</p>	

# Who Am I?

Source: Wilhelm 2002

Students portray literary characters.

<p><b>Time:</b> 5-20 minutes. This can be a quick, fun activity if students are already familiar with the process. You can stretch it out to take longer as well.</p>	
<p><b>Standard(s):</b> RL 4.1/5.1/6.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences. RL 4.3/5.3/6.3 Describe in depth character, setting, event, drawing on specific details. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events. Describe how particular plot unfolds in a series of episodes and how characters respond to change as plot moves to resolution.</p>	
<p><b>Before the activity:</b> The class needs to have shared in a whole-group reading experience so they have a collective knowledge of particular characters. This can be a read-aloud book, shared chapter book, or it can extend to well-known “famous” characters from fairy tales, movies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Options for after the activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose a character and write a journal entry from that character’s perspective.</li> <li>• Students reflect on how the way they moved and their chosen line represented the character. They can write what they would have done differently if they could do it again.</li> <li>• Students might choose a character from a book they have read, but the whole class is not familiar with. They write how they would portray that character, and why (citing textual evidence).</li> <li>• Really, any character-based activity can follow this. It will depend on what you want your students to understand and/or demonstrate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procedures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To give students a chance to practice portraying characters in a low-risk environment, have them all stand up and find a place in the room where they are away from people and objects. Tell them that this is a silent activity in which they will not be talking or making physical or eye contact with others.</li> <li>○ When students are standing in their own space in the room, ask them to think of one character from a text they are all familiar with (they decide the character in their minds, but do not tell anyone else).</li> <li>○ After they have chosen a character, ask them to begin silently walking around the room (without touching, talking, looking, or otherwise interacting with anyone else) as if they were that character. Ask leading questions like, “Do they walk slowly or quickly? How do they hold their head up?” You might make observations about different ways you see students moving, by saying “I see characters moving with their heads held high, and others moving with their arms tucked in like they are afraid...”</li> <li>○ Once students practice moving like a character for a minute or so, tell them to freeze where they are. Ask them to move around again, this time, they should think of a line that character might say, or something they might think, that would give us a hint as to who they are, without giving their actual name. Have them practice mumbling this line to themselves while they walk around.</li> <li>○ Have students return to their seats.</li> <li>○ Call on volunteers to “show” their character to the class by walking around the room again. At first, they should show the character silently. Ask the audience (other students) to raise their hand if they have a guess as to whom the student is portraying.</li> <li>○ If the class is having a hard time guessing, ask the student to say their line to the class.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Notes/Variations:</b> If the practice of moving around the room without talking, touching, or looking at others is new to your students, you might first have them simply practice this skill by playing “Go, Stop, Melt” (p. 6)</p>	

# Conscience Alley

Students explore a character's thoughts.

<b>Time:</b> 5-15 minutes. This can be a quick, fun activity if students are already familiar with the process. It might take an extra few minutes the first time you introduce it.	
<b>Standard(s):</b> RL 4.1/5.1/6.1 Drawing inferences from text; 5.2 Determine theme based on how characters respond to challenges; 4.3/5.3/6.3 Describe a character in depth- including character's thoughts.	
<b>Before the activity:</b> Read aloud from a text in which a character is put in a position to make an important decision. You can stop reading just before the character is about to make his/her decision, or review a previous moment when a character made an important decision.	<b>Options for after the activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students write a journal entry from the perspective of the character, reflecting on the moment and why s/he made a decision.</li> <li>• Students write a letter to the character, trying to convince him/her to make a certain decision, or talk him/her out of it.</li> <li>• Students write how the book would be different if the character made a different decision (later, when the repercussions of this decision are illuminated).</li> <li>• Students write about a different book they are reading independently, describing an important decision and what that character may have been thinking just before making the decision- then how it affected the book.</li> <li>• Use a cooperative learning strategy so students have an opportunity to share with others about what they said and why.</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As you are reading a book aloud, stop just before a character is about to make an important decision. You might also review a previous moment when a character made a decision.</li> <li>○ Review the term conscience and come to an agreed-upon definition (a student of mine said "the voices in your head that tell you what to do")</li> <li>○ Ask students to make two lines facing each other, with enough space for you to walk between the two lines, like an alley-way. If the classroom doesn't provide sufficient space, you might use a hallway.</li> <li>○ Tell students that you will be playing the part of the character, and they are going to be his/her conscience. As you walk past them, they will call out what they think a voice might be saying in this character's mind.</li> <li>○ Give students a moment to think of what they will say.</li> <li>○ Walk down the alley slowly, listening to each student's voice.</li> <li>○ You might want to walk back through, giving students the option to say something different, or say the same thing again, louder.</li> </ul>	
<b>Notes/Variations:</b> Instead of having the students form two lines, they can stay in their seats and as you walk around and tap them on the head, or point to each student, they express what they think the character's conscience would be saying. I received feedback from a training participant that because she was so pre-occupied with thinking about what she was going to say, she did not have a chance to hear other voices. This is a concern about this activity, so you might add a follow-up or modification to account for this issue (See the last bullet under post-activity options above).	

# Machine

Students act out parts of a whole related to the content they are studying.

**Time:** 5-20 minutes. This can be a quick, fun activity if students are already familiar with the process. You can stretch it out to take longer as well.

**Standard(s):** RL 4.2/5.2/6.2 Determine Theme; RL 4.3/5.3/6.3 Describe character or setting; RI 4.3/5.3 Explain relationships (cause & effect); RI 4.4/5.4/6.4 determine meaning of domain-specific words.

**Before the activity:**

Students should have an understanding of a literary topic (character/ setting/ theme) or a scientific or historical event.

**Options for after the activity:**

Students follow-up this activity by reflecting on their movement and sound choice for their part of the machine and how they could have represented it differently.  
Students break into small groups and create a different version of the same machine, or a machine on a different topic- other students guess their topic.

**Procedures:**

- To get students practicing the “machine,” start with a simple concept with which all students should be familiar, like a particular animal. Review that animal’s behaviors briefly.
- Ask one volunteer to come to the front of the room (or identified playing area in the classroom) and present a repeated motion and sound that would be part of this animal’s “machine”.
- Ask for other volunteers to join the machine by approaching one at a time and making a repeating sound and a clear physical connection or response to the motion of the machine parts already on stage. Remind them that this should be something they can do over and over again and sustain easily (standing on one foot while screaming loudly might not be a great choice).
- Continue calling on volunteers to join the machine by making their own unique sustainable motion and sound that connects to one previously created part of the machine.
- After a significant number of students (8-10 at least) have joined the machine, introduce “controls” to the class by saying “when I move my hands like this, the machine will slow down.” Choose a simple movement, like raising your hands up or lowering them down. You can also get the machine to get louder or softer in volume by moving your hands out wide and away from each other, or bringing them closer together.
- As the machine gets louder and faster, you can coach them to “explode” and let students fall to the ground. Or you can coach them to slow to a stop.
- Once students are familiar with the machine concept, you can identify content-based themes, ideas, objects, time periods, and characters to explore.

**Notes/Variations:** This activity can relate to many non-fiction topics that you’ve read about or are reading about. It can be a fun, quick way to reinforce a new concept in the middle of whole-class textbook reading and get the kids up and moving. For example, while reading about Food Webs, my intermediate multi-age students took a quick break to create a Food Web machine, reinforcing this concept for themselves and those around them.

## Tableau: Main Events

Students create statues with their bodies to represent moments in a story.

<b>Time:</b> About 20 minutes for main activity, 60 minutes including pre- and post-activities	
<b>Standard(s):</b> RL 4.2/5.2/6.2- provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.	
<b>Before the activity:</b> Identify the major plot events in a story. This can be done in pairs or small groups, but should eventually be agreed-upon by the whole class.	<b>Options for after the activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students identify a central theme of the book and argue why that is a theme of the story, citing details.</li> <li>Students list the most important events in an independent reading book- as if they were to do the activity again.</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After identifying the main events in a shared book, select three volunteers to come to the front of the classroom (or other central area in the classroom). Introduce the idea that they will be creating a human sculpture or tableau. The rest of the class and the teacher will be the sculptor/director.</li> <li>Ask for suggestions from the audience about which characters or pieces of the setting need to be represented in the first major event of the book. Get suggestions on how the players can represent those people/objects.</li> <li>When everyone has decided on a decent depiction of the first major moment have students freeze in that tableau or sculpture by saying “3, 2, 1, Freeze!”</li> <li>Ask for a fourth volunteer to state a “caption” that describes this moment in the story.</li> <li>Divide students into groups of three or four.</li> <li>Assign each group a different event in the book. (if there are more events than there are groups, assign multiple events to each group- up to 3 events per group).</li> <li>Give students time (5 minutes per statue, so up to 15 if they are creating 3 different statues) to decide on their positions for each moment, as well as a caption that their fourth group member can state. (Alternately, one of the students in tableau could say the caption if they need all four to create the tableau or if they are only working in groups of three. They could also say the caption together, chorally). Circulate and assist as needed.</li> <li>Bring students back together and position them around the edge of the classroom, or in different areas of the classroom (whatever works for your set-up).</li> <li>Have students all practice their statue at once by saying “3, 2, 1, Freeze!” and then have them practice their caption by saying “Action” or “Go”.</li> <li>After students have practiced their statues, have all groups sit down right where they are. Review basic audience etiquette (no talking/moving, eyes focused on actors in the “spotlight”)</li> <li>Identify the group to present first. Have that group stand and present their work to the rest of the class. Have each group take turns presenting their tableau for the rest of the class with minimal pauses in between the statues- in the order the events take place in the story.</li> </ul>	
<b>Notes/Variations:</b> Once students are familiar with tableau, you can skip the introductory demonstration- though it is always good to model it first. You may choose to have students present their tableau at the front of the class, with lamps creating an actual spotlight and the rest of the classroom lights dimmed. Within a tableau, students can explore different perspectives by having their character come “to life” and say one line that the character would be thinking in that moment. This is an activity that has been used so often and so much that I encourage you to look it up online to find more variations or ideas on how to use it in a classroom.	

## Talk Show- Whole Class Variation

Source: Kelner & Flynn 2006

Teacher hosts an imaginary talk show and interviews characters from a story.

**Time:** 5-30 minutes, depending on students' familiarity with the activity and your purposes for using it. It can be a quick review of a section in a book, or a way to assess your students' understanding of a character's motivations.

**AK Standard(s):** RL 4.1/5.1/6.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when drawing inferences. RL 4.3/5.3/6.3 Describe in depth character, setting, event, drawing on specific details. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events. Describe how particular plot unfolds in a series of episodes and how characters respond to change as plot moves to resolution. RL 4.6/5.6/6.6: compare and contrast point of view, and how narrator's point of view influences how events are described.

### Before the activity:

The class needs to have shared in a whole-group reading experience so they have a collective knowledge of particular characters. This can be a read-aloud book, shared chapter book, or it can extend to well-known "famous" characters from fairy tales, movies, etc.

### Options for after the activity:

- Students choose a character and write a journal entry from that character's perspective.
- Students reflect on how they answered a question. They can write what they would have done differently if they could do it again.
- Students might choose a character from a book they have read, but the whole class is not familiar with. They write questions they would ask that character and how the character would respond (citing textual evidence).
- Really, any character-based activity can follow this. It will depend on what you want your students to understand and/or demonstrate.

### Procedures:

- Students review characters of a shared book. Discuss internal & external characteristics of each character. (I created posters with the outline of a body to represent each main character from a read-aloud text. Students took turns writing internal characteristics inside the body and external characteristics outside the body on each poster. We then reviewed each poster as a class.)
- Ask everyone to imagine they are one character in particular. Have them practice moving, thinking, and talking like that character. (Consider leading students through the "Who Am I?" activity (p. ) or "Go/Stop/Melt" (p. ) to help them get into character for the talk show.)
- After reviewing the character you want them to portray in the talk show, have students return to their seats (if they aren't already there).
- You, as the teacher, will now transition into a talk-show host character. You can put on a hat, goofy glasses, or necktie, or simply use a cheesy talk show announcer voice to symbolize your role. Introduce yourself as the host of a talk show. Then, walk around the room using a marker (or other object) as a "microphone" and ask students inferential questions. Some sample language you might use for this activity: "Welcome to today's show of 'Book Talks,' where we get the chance to interview famous characters from our favorite books! I'm your host Ms. Bookie. (cue students to applaud). Thank you. Viewers, we are so lucky to have (character name) from one of my favorite books, (book title)! Let's welcome, (character name). Now, (name), tell me..." (Ask a variety of questions as you walk around the room, interviewing different students as if they were all the same character. Keep students "on their toes" by asking spontaneous follow-up questions based on previous student responses).
- Some question ideas: What were you thinking when...? Tell us about your family... Tell us about the time you...

**Notes/Variations:** See Small Group Variation, where students write questions a talk show host might ask of their character, with a student playing the role of Talk Show Host.

## Talk Show- Small Group Variation

Source: Kelner & Flynn 2006

Students create a talk show episode and interview characters from a shared text.

<p><b>Time:</b> 30-90 minutes, depending on students' familiarity with the activity/text and your purposes for using it. It can serve as a quick review of a section in a book, or a way to assess your students' understanding of a character's motivations. It can also be used to check understanding of informational text.</p>	
<p><b>Standard(s):</b> RL 4.1/5.1/6.1 &amp; RI 4.1/5.1/6.1: Refer to details and examples when drawing inferences. RL 4.3/5.3/6.3 Describe in depth character, setting, event, drawing on specific details. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events. Describe how particular plot unfolds in a series of episodes and how characters respond to change as plot moves to resolution. RL 4.6/5.6/6.6: compare and contrast point of view, and how narrator's point of view influences how events are described. RI 4.2/5.2/6.2: Determine main or central idea, subtopics, and details.</p>	
<p><b>Before the activity:</b> The class needs to have shared in a whole-group or small-group reading experience. Groups should have a collective knowledge of particular characters or information. This can be a read-aloud book, shared chapter book, shared informational article, or well-known "famous" characters from fairy tales, movies, etc.</p>	<p><b>Options for after the activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose a character and write a journal entry from that character's perspective.</li> <li>• Students reflect on how they answered a question. They can write what they would have done differently if they could do it again.</li> <li>• Students might choose a character from a book they have read, but the whole class is not familiar with. They write questions they would ask that character and how the character would respond (citing textual evidence).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procedures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Model this activity if this is the first time you are introducing it. Use a commonly known text (fairy tale or movie) and fill out the planning sheet (see next page) as a class. Have student volunteers play the interviewees while you play the talk show host.</li> <li>○ Place students in groups of 2-5 (more than 5 can be hard for students to manage themselves).</li> <li>○ Students review information of a shared reading experience. They discuss characters and events from a fictional piece, or main ideas/events/people in an informational article.</li> <li>○ Hand out the "Interview Planning Sheet" (next page) and give parameters for work time and content (what kinds of questions you want them to ask, or if you want them to quote directly from the text- this will depend on what your instructional goals are and if you are using this as an assessment tool).</li> <li>○ Allow students time in groups to decide who might be interviewed, and what questions could be asked. All students in the group can represent one character and take turns responding to questions, or they can each take on a different character.</li> <li>○ After students have filled out the planning sheet with their questions and answers, they will need some time to practice how they will present their "talk show" to the class (5-10 minutes should be plenty. Consider putting a cap on how long their presentation will take).</li> <li>○ Groups take turns presenting their "talk show" to the rest of the class.</li> <li>○ If you think they are up for it, give the audience (other group members) a chance to ask questions of the talk show guests.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Notes/Variations:</b> See whole group variation.</p>	



## Talk Show Planning Sheet

ArticleTitle/Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize: What is the **Main Idea** of this Article? Or What happened in this section of the book?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Talk Show Host: \_\_\_\_\_ Talk Show Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of character(s) you will interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions asked of the interviewee, and their answers to the questions:

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Newscast

Source: Wilhelm 2002

Students create and perform a newscast about a non-fiction article.

<b>Time:</b> 60-90 minutes including pre- and post-activities, depending on ability and cooperation of groups.	
<b>Standard(s):</b> RI 4.1/5.1/6.1- Refer to details and examples/quote accurately/cite textual evidence when explaining what the text says and drawing inferences from it. RI 4.2/5.2/6.2- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.	
<b>Before the activity:</b> Students read (independently, in pairs, or as a whole class) non-fiction material. This can be a textbook chapter or non-fiction magazine.	<b>Options for after the activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record the newscast and post on a blog for parents to view or share with other students/classes.</li> <li>Students write their own newscast of an independent reading assignment, a school-wide activity/assembly, or the school day and perform it for the class.</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose one short article or section from the chosen informational text piece. Re-read the article with the students (modeling this as the first step of the activity).</li> <li>Show students the “Newscast Planning Sheet” and use a document camera and projector to model filling out the sheet for that particular short article (ask students for suggestions while filling out the form, so they are actively engaged and can ask questions if they are confused).</li> <li>Launch into your own version of a newscast. Example language: <i>“From Room 312 studios, this is the nightly news with Ms. Finnell. I’m your host, Ms. Finnell, here to tell you about breaking news from the Sochi Olympics where...(include three details from the planning sheet). And now over to (insert student volunteer name here) who is live at the scene with (expert/eye witness).”</i> Student volunteers then read questions and answers previously written on planning sheet. (allow 10-15 minutes for this modeling of the activity which is crucial for students to understand your expectations).</li> <li>After answering any questions from students, you may choose to ask them which article they would like to newscast, or assign groups to different sections/articles. This activity works best with groups of three students.</li> <li>Give each group a planning sheet and tell them their task is to 1) re-read their section, 2) fill out the planning sheet together, 3) decide how they will present it, and 4) practice their newscast. (Time for this will vary depending on your class- My students needed about 30-45 minutes to complete this task)</li> <li>After everyone has practiced at least once, identify a “performance space” in your classroom and have groups take turns presenting their newscast. (Allow about 5 minutes per group).</li> </ul>	
<b>Notes/Variations:</b> It is best to keep the reading, planning, and performing of this activity in one continuous lesson so it is fresh in students’ minds. When I tried it out with my class (of 26 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , & 6 <sup>th</sup> graders) it ended up taking about 90 minutes (30 for instructions & set-up, 30 for group planning and practice, 30 for sharing newscasts). You might also try this activity with fictional texts, or as a weekly activity in which a group of students does a Newscast about what the class learned or what happened in a read-aloud book that week.	

## Newscast Planning Sheet

Article Title: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the **Main Idea** of this Article?

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---

What are three **Supporting Details** you will include in your newscast?

Detail #1

Detail #2

Detail #3

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### **Include an interview!**

Name of person you will interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: expert or eye-witness

Questions you will ask the interviewee, and their answers to the questions:

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Choose roles:**

Newscaster #1 (in the studio- introduces main idea and supporting details):

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Newscaster #2 (on location- interviews expert/eye-witness): \_\_\_\_\_

Expert/Eye-Witness (answers questions): \_\_\_\_\_

## Modify My Action

**Source:** Arts IMPACT Institute, Dave Quicksall

Students use movement to practice using adverbs to modify verbs.

<b>Time:</b> 10-20 minutes, depending on students' familiarity with the activity. The first time will take a little longer to model the expectations. Once they are familiar with it, this can be a quick review of verbs and adverbs.	
<b>Standard(s):</b> Language 4.1a/5.1a/6.1a: Demonstrate command of standard English grammar, including appropriate use of verbs and adverbs.	
<b>Before the activity:</b> Review what is a verb and what is an adverb.	<b>Options for after the activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Students revise a piece of writing, paying special attention to the verbs they've written and using adverbs to effectively modify those verbs.</li></ul>
<b>Procedures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>First- model the activity along with a student volunteer, or choose two student volunteers who can demonstrate the activity. You can demonstrate as an "A" by silently choosing a verb from the verb list and acting it out until the student guesses the verb correctly. Have the student volunteer tell you an adverb from the adverb list, and act out the verb again, this time modifying it so it demonstrates the adverb. For example, I acted out "flapping" to my students. After they guessed it correctly, I called on a volunteer, who gave me the word "timidly." I then flapped timidly. We switched roles and the volunteer chose a verb to act out silently. I guessed it, then gave him an adverb with which to modify his verb.</li><li>After you have demonstrated how this activity works, divide students into pairs, in which one student is "A" and the other is "B."</li><li>Distribute one verb/adverb list to each pair. Have students work in pairs while you circulate and assist as necessary for the following steps:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ask A's to pick any verb from the list (without telling B's which verb they chose).</li><li>A's silently act out the verb until B guesses correctly.</li><li>After B's have guessed correctly, they give an adverb from their list to the A's.</li><li>The A students modify their actions to reflect the new attribute given to them by their partner.</li><li>Students switch roles after each turn so that everyone gets to work on the verbs and adverbs.</li></ul></li><li>Allow time for pairs to perform for the rest of the class.</li></ul>	
<b>Notes/Variations:</b> You'll notice that "List 1" is simpler than "List 2". Depending on your grade level, you might want students to focus on List 1 words first, before trying out List 2. You might rather generate the list with your class so you are sure all students understand the meaning and know how to read every word.	

## Student Verb Lists

### VERBS LIST “1”

leaping  
popping  
blinking  
pounding  
creeping  
dancing  
spinning  
flapping  
hopping

### VERBS LIST “2”

bubbling  
flailing  
whisking  
flowing  
flittering  
pouncing  
coughing  
groaning  
jumping  
jerking  
kicking  
laughing  
soaring  
rattling  
winking

## Student Adverb List

### ADVERBS LIST “1”

gently  
fast  
softly  
backwards  
quietly  
slowly  
strongly  
sneakily  
wildly  
sharply  
smoothly

### ADVERB LIST “2”

lightly  
intensely  
vigorously  
eagerly  
skillfully  
sluggishly  
powerfully  
timidly  
gracefully  
dramatically  
jerkily  
confidently  
clumsily  
fluidly

**Activities Listed by Standard**

**Reading Literature**

**RL 4.1/5.1/6.1** Refer to details and examples when drawing inferences.

Conscience Alley (p.8)

Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)

Who Am I? (p.7)

**RL 4.2/5.2/6.2** Provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. Determine theme based on how characters respond to challenges.

Conscience Alley (p.8) – Explore how characters respond to challenges

Machine (p.9)- Theme

Tableau- Main Events (p.10)- Summarizing

**RL 4.3/5.3/6.3** Describe in depth character, setting, event, drawing on specific details. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events. Describe how particular plot unfolds in a series of episodes and how characters respond to change as plot moves to resolution.

Conscience Alley (p.8)-Describe character in depth including thoughts

Machine (p.9)

Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)

Who Am I? (p.7)

**RL 4.6/5.6/6.6** Compare and contrast point of view, and how narrator's point of view influences how events are described.

Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)

**Reading Informational Text**

**RI 4.1/5.1/6.1** Refer to details and examples when drawing inferences.

Newscast (p.14)

Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)

**RI 4.2/5.2/6.2** Determine main or central idea, subtopics, and details.

Newscast (p.14)

Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

**RI 4.3/5.3/6.3** Describe relationships: Cause & Effect

Machine (p.9)

**RI 4.4/5.4/6.4** Determine meaning of domain-specific words

Machine (p.9)

**Language 4.1a/5.1a/6.1a** Demonstrate command of standard English grammar, including appropriate use of verbs and adverbs.

Modify My Action (p.16)

## Activities Listed by Objective

### **Reading Literature: Character**

Who Am I? (p.7)  
Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)  
Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)  
Conscience Alley (p.8)

### **Reading Literature: Summarizing**

Tableau Main Events (p.10)  
Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)  
Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)  
Newscast (p.14)

### **Reading Literature: Theme**

Machine (p.9)  
Conscience Alley (p.8)

### **Reading Informational Text: Explain what text says and draw inferences**

Newscast (p.14)  
Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)  
Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

### **Reading Informational Text: Main Idea & detail**

Newscast (p.14)  
Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)  
Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)

### **Reading Informational Text: Relationships (cause & effect)**

Machine (p.9)

### **Reading Informational Text: Domain-specific words**

Machine (p.9)

## Activities Listed by Time

### **Quick: 5-20 minutes**

Go Stop Melt (p.6)  
Machine (p.9)  
Who Am I? (p.7)  
Modify My Action (p.16)  
Conscience Alley (p.8)  
Talk Show- Whole Class (p.11)

### **Longer: 30-90 minutes**

Newscast (p.14)  
Talk Show- Small Group (p.12)  
Tableau Main Events (p.10)

## Annotated Bibliography

**Boal, A. (2002). *Games for Actors and Non-actors (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. (Jackson, A., Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1992)**

This book is filled with a wide variety of activities that are geared toward any and all ages. Many require open space and are focused on getting participants to work together, build trust, and tune into their senses. A big goal of Theater of the Oppressed is to solve problems using theater. Spectators are actually Spect-actors because everyone gets to be a player in these games.

**Kelner, L. B. & Flynn, R. M. (2006). *A Dramatic Approach to Reading Comprehension: Strategies and Activities for Classroom Teachers*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann.**

This book includes a wealth of information on a limited number of activities. If you are interested in going much deeper with Talk Show, or would like to try getting your students to act out an entire book, this resource will provide planning sheets, assessment tools, and in-depth procedures for using drama in your classroom. Rosalind Flynn has her own website, <http://www.rosalindflynn.com>, where you can find more of her work, and her blog, <http://dramaticapproachestoteaching.com>, with great information and tips.

**Laitta, C. & Weakland, M. (2002). *The Dramatically Different Classroom: MI Activities Across the Curriculum*. Kagan Publishing.**

Not just about Reading Comprehension, this book provides activities that can be used in a classroom and relate to a variety of subjects. With simple procedures and minimal prep time required, this book has a wealth of activities to try out in your classroom to get your students actively engaged in the learning process.

**Willhelm, J.D. (2002). *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension*. New York, N.Y.: Scholastic.**

This is by far the most useful and inspiring book I have found regarding using drama to teach reading comprehension. My copy is flagged with at least a dozen sticky-notes—more than I could have attempted in one busy school year. While there is a huge amount of activities described in this book, it is up to the reader to decide how to go about specifically implementing them in his/her classroom. I recommend this book if you are interested in finding more ways to get your students actively engaged with reading material.